

READING STRATEGY

*This selection is a narrative about an incident in someone's life. To help you pick out the most important events in the story, you could use one of the following strategies:*

- *Story map (see page 56)*
- *Story frame (see page 173)*
- *Event map (see page 156)*

*Look back at each of these strategies, and choose the one you prefer.*

*After reading the selection, discuss with a partner how well your strategy worked for you.*



Reconciliation

Vocabulary Preview

- > reconciliation
- >• ultimately >
- > calamity
- calamitous
- > genesis \*•
- reciprocated
- persistent
- arranged marriage
- limited resources

by Sandra Shamas

Now, whenever I don't want to accept something, I try to reason with it. It's called a "failed relationship," so I wanted to know when it failed, like where was the point of failure? Were we just going along and then *pfft!* it failed? Or, were we failing all along? And then, in ultimately failing, did we succeed?

You know, whenever there's calamity, you think of every time there was something wrong, something calamitous that happened in your life. I sat down, and I went through every failed relationship I have ever had. It was exhausting. And I went right back to my own genesis, to the very very first failed relationship of my whole life, which was the one I had with my mother.

You know, if the definition of true love is to look into someone's eyes and know you will love them forever, I am sure that is what happens between a mother and a child. I loved my mother. I loved her. I didn't like her. And I'll go out on a limb and say those feelings were reciprocated. And we had a very long, and angry, and violent relationship, and I never



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understood it, and I tried to figure it out in my child's mind, but I never ever did. And finally, when I was seventeen, I left home to save my life.

As I am thinking of this, I hear the Voice say:

"Forgive by Wednesday. Call by Sunday."

"What?! I'm not going to forgive her, I'm not forgiving her, I'm not forgiving her, because she was mean

to me the whole time. I am not forgiving her, and besides, she never called me!"

"Forgive by Wednesday. Call by Sunday."

The Voice is persistent, and it is always right.

A window of opportunity opens in this moment like never before and I see her like another woman. She is twenty-two years old, and she is being married to a man twenty years her senior through an arranged marriage. She has known him for two weeks. She will eventually leave her home and her community and be brought to Canada, to live amongst strangers, to see snow for the first time. She will live in isolation, and within ten months of her arrival, have a child in her arms. I thought, if somebody was telling me that story, I would be crying and saying, "How sad for you, and I'm so, so sorry." I saw that she had limited resources. I call it "stick soup." Whenever we needed

I said, "Me, too."

And he said, "Yeah, but call me after, though, eh?"

He gives me the number. I hang up from Michael and pick up the phone again.

My heart is beating so hard I can see the skin on my chest moving.

I dial the number.

Of course, I've never forgotten it in all my whole life.

Somebody else answers the phone.

I ask for her by her first name, the phone goes down on the counter, and I hear footsteps coming towards the phone. And then, the first voice of my whole life picks up the phone, and says, "Hello?"

"Mama?"

She says, "Sandra?"

I say, "Yeah, Mama, it's me."

"How are *your*'

I said, "I'm really nervous, Mama."

She says quickly, "What are you nervous about?"

"I haven't talked to you in a long, long time."

She sobs, "I know. I think about you every day."

She says, "What do you think, uh? You're my daughter."

I hadn't been somebody's daughter in twenty years. And man, we cried.

And so there I am on the phone with my mom after twenty years, and I say, "Mama . . . Mama, I was married to a man, and he left me."

She said, "Well, I don't know. Something wrong with him."

If your mom says so, it's true!

I went to see her. Two days later I went to see her. In my child's mind's eye, my mother was eight-and-a-half feet tall, like a Tyrannosaurus rex, and when I got to the door, and the door opened she is five-foot-three. "Hey-hey-hey! You are little! I could just squeeze your head!" It was good to go home. It was good to make peace

#### DIRECTLY STATED IDEAS AND INFORMATION

1. What does the speaker feel was the very first failed relationship she had, and why did it fail?
2. Summarize what the speaker knows of her mother's life.

#### INDIRECTLY STATED IDEAS AND INFORMATION

3. What do you think "the Voice" is?
4. What does the speaker mean by "stick soup"?

#### MAKING CONNECTIONS

5. Think of a time when you had to do something you were afraid to do, and how it turned out.

## Reconciliation

### Directly Stated Ideas and Information- Explicit

1. What does the speaker feel was the very first failed relationship she had, and why did it fail?
2. Summarize what the speaker knows of her mother's life.

### Indirectly Stated Ideas and Information- Implicit

3. What do you think the "voice" is?
4. Summarize what the speaker mean by "stick soup"?

### Making Connections

5. Think of a time when you had to do something you were afraid to do, and how it turned out. (explain/write it here)